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OF
OLD GREECE





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BY

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TO THAT VERY POTENT FACTOR
IN THE MAKING OF THE BRITAIN YET TO BE,
“THE SIXTH CLASSICAL”
IN
ENGLAND'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
THESE RHYMES ARE DEDICATED,
IN LASTING GRATITUDE TO
THE REV. EDWARD SPENCER, M.A.,
WHOSE INSIGHT PENETRATED, AND
WHOSE SPIRIT LIT THE STORY OF THE PAST,
FOR THOSE OLD BOYS, WHO IN PLEASANT HOURS
GATHERED ROUND THE HEADMASTER'S DESK
IN THE OLD TAVISTOCK GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

946381



The Author desires to express his acknowledgment of the permission kindly accorded by the Proprietors of the "Boys' Own Paper" for the reprinting of "Marathon" and "The Traitor Greek."

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MARATHON.

Concerning the Fight.

THE men of the present have good reason to confess the debt they owe to ancient Greece; and it is scarcely too much to assert that, in regard to art, to literature, and to philosophy, their thanks are largely, though by no means exclusively, due to one city.

Athens has laid the whole civilised world under obligations difficult alike to discharge, or to forget.

What we, to-day, should have been

without her influence, and without those “things of beauty” which her genius called into being, it is vain to conjecture. We may endeavour to realise, approximately at the best, what her temples and her statues must have been in the period of her unrivalled prime: but this we surely know,—that, although the once faultless proportions of the fane may be marred by the touch of time, or by the rude blows of the invader—whether Macedonian or Roman, Barbarian or Turk,—and although the life-like statues lie dethroned from the pedestals whereon, of old, they stood; it is, nevertheless, just these marvellous fragments of

Greek art that still suffice to indicate both model and method for the architect or for the sculptor of to-day. Those time-worn yet majestic relics are still so many inspirations to modern genius, that yet finds rich content in patiently setting itself to catch the spirit embodied in those wonderful creations.

Unique, too, in its character, is the mark which Athens made for herself in human history. Rome toiled hard and long for her imperial position, and long and proudly did she maintain it. As century follows century we find the City of the Seven Hills sedulously developing her amazing resources, and

persistently extending her sway. She took time to cut her mighty name deeply into history ; while it seems all but incredible that the tiny span of some seventy-five years embraced the rise of Athens into power, the fruitage of her almost fabulous genius, and her swift but sure passage into decadence and dependence. She flashes forth like some vivid meteor of the night, that leaves behind it the recollection of a radiance, that dazzles and astounds for a while, when it has itself fled out of vision into darkness.

Western civilisation, too, owes to Athens a tribute no less than that which art and philosophy must consent to pay.

History, on its living page, can re-people for us the field whereon East and West tried their first and all-important fall with one another. Under its enlightening guidance, one can see tribe after tribe, nation after nation enveloped within the Persian power, compelled into a heterogeneous mass beneath the standard of the Great King, and launched, in turn, on Egypt, on Phœnicia, and on Asia Minor. Ever westward the host moves surely on, until, some five centuries before our era, Persian and Greek at last found themselves confronting one another; and, as far as we can see, no possible alternative was left them, but to fight

their battle out, if the spirit of the West would shake itself once and forever free from Eastern sloth and despotism.

How the approach of the great conflict was heralded—in the cry of the Ionian Greeks for freedom, and in the tighter riveting of their Persian fetters after their fruitless effort at revolt,—every sixth form boy knows well enough; but after all, it was nothing less than the future of Europe which was at stake, when Miltiades and his men so daringly sprang upon the invading hordes at Marathon.

It may well be that we, to-day, can better estimate the wider issues in-

volved, than could the heroic and self-devoted patriots who played their part in that fierce drama. True it is that it was for Athens, and for her liberties, that her own sons fought. It was for Athens that the little band of Platæans—with an unreserved devotion unmatched in Grecian story—formed in line with the men of the city that had proved herself their friend. It was Athens who won, and was allowed, the meed of triumph: the glory was all her own, unshared even by puissant Sparta, whose warriors lingered at home, either bound by subservience to their priests, or moved, as some have suggested, by motives as despicable as

they were selfish. No wonder that the name of Marathon was ever afterwards the proudest in the annals of the City of the Violet Crown, or that the men who had fought in that famed fight should be held in that well-deserved honour, which their grateful fellow-citizens were careful at every opportunity to express, and even to emphasise. But such deeds are pregnant of widely reaching results, and that this was the case in regard to the victory at Marathon, the unfolding pages of the book of time most amply show.

Had Persia proved the conqueror, what remained for Greece, and for the

peoples west of her, but inevitable submission, and the consequent putting back of the hands on the dial-plate of human progress?

With Athens defeated, there would have come into play a moral effect, which would have gone far to weaken the spirit of Sparta, who, with all her loudly-vaunted pre-eminence in valour, was by no means insensitive to nervousness—as, for instance, when Pausanias, by his shifting dispositions at Plataea, endeavoured to confront the Athenians, rather than his own Spartans, with the chosen troops of Mardonius. Supreme in Greece, nothing could have hindered Persia from throwing her myriads upon

Europe. Phœnicia was already at her disposal. The Greeks once reduced to vassalage, could have been compelled to furnish shipping amply sufficient to strike at the coasts of the Mediterranean, and to answer any challenge that such a state as Carthage might have dared to offer to the Persian despot. To say that Rome was unready for a trial of strength with such an adversary is to say all too little, since not till two centuries after Marathon had been fought and won had she made herself securely mistress of the states and tribes of Italy alone. Had it not been for that scanty band of Athenians and Platæans, the shores

of the Atlantic alone might have arrested the Persian advance westward. Speculation is not without its attractions, it is true; but it is well within the bounds of possibility that the future progress of the West in life, in liberty, and, as many may think, in religion also, was ensured when Athens triumphantly drove back the Persian invaders to their ships.

Round this great story of the past there plays the unfading lustre of a heroism that testifies to every age and race what true men can really do, encompassed though they be by a countless host of foreign foes, and vexed with stealthy treason within

their own walls. But the very knowledge that such traitors were at their abominable work, in the city itself, must have rendered Miltiades only the more determined to give them as little time as possible wherein to spread their poison, or to paralyse the high-spirited troops that had marched out to fight the Persian at the shore whereon he had dared to land.

Nor is it foreign to the matter to note here, how for hundreds of years Europeans have been wont to look with perfect equanimity on any number of Eastern enemies, no matter how terribly disproportionate the odds against themselves.

In the apparently hopeless ratio of one against eleven did those unblenching Greeks join battle ; but, the struggle once entered upon and decided, the full sense of the superiority of Western spirit, nerve, and muscle was acquired also, and every subsequent conflict served but to make that sense clearer. Easterns, too, very soon came to appreciate it from their own side, until at last we find an Asiatic princess rushing away in fright when the Greek mercenaries, in the days of Xenophon, did but clash their weapons in the harmless tumult of a grand review. But it must be remembered in simple justice to the Greeks, that, previous to the experience

gained at Marathon, such a feeling must have been largely unknown ; and that one fact is enough to impress upon the record of this historic struggle the traces of the noblest self-devotion that patriot soldiers can possibly manifest.

And striking is the contrast presented, from any point of view, by the opposing forces. The Persian, complacently trusting in his multitudes, waiting in almost sluggish confidence to be attacked, hampered by his very sense of invincibility,—because under it he laid aside all thought of strategy, and left himself utterly without *verve*,—and serenely relying on his *corps d'élite*, the Persians and the Sacæ, to inspire

the motley crowd of soldiery with something of their own stubborn, rather than aggressive, valour. And the Greek, contemplating with pride, not wholly unmixed with confidence, an army, tiny indeed when contrasted with the swarms of his antagonist, but in which every heavy-armed man was, more or less, a trained and seasoned athlete; for had it not been so, the Greek commander had not ventured to fling his men at the double over that mile that separated the hostile forces, and to join battle without one moment's breathing time.

It will doubtless remain an interesting matter of opinion as to the real cause

that induced Miltiades to give battle exactly when he did.

Military critics have reasonably suggested the possible absence of a considerable portion of the Persian cavalry, not improbably for foraging purposes. It might have been so, especially when we reflect that the Athenian strength lay in its infantry, and so, to the Grecian leader, one element at least of Persian preponderance would have been temporarily, and for him most opportunely, removed.

He relies entirely on the momentum of each wing of his compact little force. With fine strategy, he deliberately weakens his own centre to tempt the

strongest body of the enemy's troops to indulge in the dangerous excitement of a pursuit of the outnumbered Grecian centre; and, with the success of his plan, the Persian wings, left unsupported by their main body, fell confusedly together like two tottering walls from which the strengthening span of a reliable girder has been suddenly removed.

Rolling their adversary's panic-stricken wings together, not so much in fight as in demoralising rout, the Greeks found themselves able to fasten on the rear of those Persians who, lured from their own position, were pressing after the retiring Greek centre. That immediate issue was soon decided, the

Persians desperately struggling backward to the beach, and it was there, in the wild effort to save their vessels, that the fiercest and most sanguinary conflict of the day really took place. That "Battle at the Ships" lent lasting inspiration to the Greek poet: for there Æschylus himself was fighting, while, close at his side, his own brother Cynægeirus, and many another hero, was struck down.

And so the fight was fought, when alas! even as the plain resounded with the cries of triumph, some mean-souled traitor was found to hold aloft upon Pentelicus a bright shield to tempt the Persian fleet into the harbour of

Phalerum before it was thought possible that the patriot army could return to defend the city. But yet again, fresh astonishment fills us when we learn how Miltiades, giving those perfectly trained troops of his scarce a moment's respite, marched swiftly homewards in time to extinguish the last hopes of invasion and of treason combined.

At once the resting-place of the honoured dead, and the abiding memorial of the valour of Athenian citizens, it is nothing marvellous or unwonted to find the spot itself invested with a superstitious, yet at the same time most reverent, awe. The dark midnight clouds, when unlit by the moonbeams,

were held by a fancy born of patriotism, and of religion, to envelop the disembodied souls of those who had perished in the great struggle. These were now thought of as fighting their battle over again, in the realm of the spirit ; as any one might hear, so people said, who found himself pursuing some necessary errand, and traversing, without intention or idle curiosity, that plain at an hour at once so gloomy and so weird.

Out of Time's ever-thickening veil, the stirring memories of the fight would still rise. It was a story that would be enthusiastically and proudly handed down from sire to son. It was the

Athenian's glory in the days of his city's magnificent but brief pre-eminence, and it gilded with "the light of other days" that sadder time, when beneath the fatal disasters of the Peloponnesian War, fomented against her by enemies in whose jealous eyes that pre-eminence was her worst crime, Athens sank in weakness, never more to fill that lofty seat to which she had surely ascended from the field of Marathon.

MARATHON.

490 B.C.

Told by ARISTOCLES, who had served in the battle as an Athenian officer, under MILTIADES, to his grandson GLAUCUS, at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, B.C. 431.

Like thunder rolling through a sky
With cloud long overcast,
I hear the sound the land around
Of war declared at last.

For Theban hate, and Spartan pride,
And Corinth's crafty spite,
Have forced the State to look for
peace
Upon the field of fight.

But words are wind when blades are
out,
And passion pants for strife ;
Arm, Glaucus ! Hark ! th' Athenian
trump
Defies the Spartan file !
But Fate, have mercy ! Both brave
sons
To our dear land I gave,
And Victory rocked them to their rest
Beneath the Samian wave !

Thou 'rt all that 's left me, Glaucus !
And thou the foe must face ;
For Athens calls thee forth to fill
Thy gallant father's place.
His sword the sea-god keeps for aye ;
Bind thou thy grandsire's on,
And gird thee with the good tough brass
I wore at Marathon.

There, wand'ers say, when not a ray
May light the midnight sky,
The ghostly foemen wheel in air,
And lift their battle-cry.
And memory wakens in my soul
That din of conflict sore,
When Persian darts came hurtling thick
Upon our shields of yore.

A lonely band we gathered there ;
 'Twas Athens 'gainst a world !
And fearless, in th' invaders' teeth
 Their challenge back she hurled.
Those Spartans, tethered to their priests,
 Stayed gaping at the moon !
Alone the staunch Plataëans ranged
 With us that afternoon.

To cries of welcome, shouts of joy,
 Resounding far and nigh,
The lads who wore the leathern helm
 With steady swing went by.
For true and loyal to the last,
 Plataëa gave her all,
Content in that dread hour to share
 Our triumph, or our fall !

Those friendly spears, those few stout
 hearts,

 Were all our help that day,
When front to front, we dared a foe—
 Eleven to one, men say !

But Freedom's spirit fired our hearts,
 And braced our arms with might,
And twenty slaves to one free man
 Seemed scarce unequal fight !

And never fairer day might shed
 Its gentle radiance round ;
It lulled the breeze, it stilled the seas,
 It breathed of rest profound.
With fitful murmur on the air
 Was borne the insect's hum,
And faintly, softly, distantly,
 We heard the Persian drum.

The morn's parade, the daily drill,
Our ready troops had done :
With helmet doffed, within my tent—
In shelter from the sun—
I sat with Cynægeirus, while
He touched his much-loved lyre,
Whose strings his gifted hand could
sweep
In pathos, or in fire.

And sweet, but strangely sad, the song
My comrade sang that day,—
How lonesome woman's loving heart
Bewailed her lord away :
And while that chief on Trojan strand
Led on his Greeks again,
A Lycian arrow drank his blood,
And stretched him by the main.

In silence sank the trembling chords ;
No word the stillness broke :
A sense, all weird, of peril near
We felt, and neither spoke.
And close at hand, the while we mused,
The General's herald stood,
And stirring words he spake, that well
Might quicken warrior blood.

For somewhat 'mid the foe, that hour
Miltiades might mark ;
And, turning to Callimachus,
The cheery Polemarch
Said quickly : " Friend, this prize is
ours !

Can'st mark the Persian horse ?
The Gods have sent them foraging,—
They lack nigh half their force !

“ Turn out the troops at once ! Their
posts

Both men and leaders know.

’Tis on this moment Victory sits,

And asks but one bold blow !

The centre with Themistocles,

And Aristides true !

Platæa to the left ! the right

Falls, Polemarch, to you ! ”

With wingèd words, from tent to tent

Sped on the chief’s command :

“ The longed-for hour has come ! Fall
in !

To arms ! To arms, men, stand ! ”

And prompt the muster. Nor dismay,

Nor dread the heroes knew :

But shield by shield, and brand by brand,
Athenian and Platæan stand ;
For stern defence of Motherland,
The sign for battle flew.

Now here, now there, flit lofty crests,
'Mid slanting, shimmering spears ;
Along the sky soars Freedom's cry
In proudly pealing cheers.
An instant's pause upon the hill,—
A clarion sharply rings,
And down the steel-fringed centres sweeps,
Down sweep the brass-clad wings.

Then bravely forward ! Faster yet,
And closer still we drew ;
We spoiled the range of their archers
strange,
And baffled shafts they threw :

And lissome Greeks in armour bright,
And faultless in array,
Plunged deep within those dusky
ranks,
As falls in cloud the day.

On right, on left, the thronging hordes
In terror flinched, where flashed our
swords
That clove their thirsty way.
In groans died out their laughter
hoarse,
That hailed our onset's daring course ;
Their spears and bows, their foot, their
horse,
To wild confusion driven, perforce,
In hopeless disarray !

We broke the flying Bactrian's bow ;
We laid the gilded Median low ;
 When, to retrieve the day,
Full on our Grecian front o'erprest,
Outnumbered, struggling, sore distress,
Dashed Persia's strongest and her best,
 And backward thrust the fray !

But scarce the charge their trumpet
 sings,
When fiercely in their staggering wings
The Athenian spears drove deep their
 stings,
 And fright and fate they bore !
The invader's star sank down in gloom,
That mocking triumph veiled his doom ;
 The fight was ours once more !

And Persians scattered, pierced, or
torn,
Their courage crushed, their splendour
shorn,
Like helpless brutes to shambles borne,
Lay smitten on the shore.

Around the field, triumphant shouts
Were thundering from our lips,
While stiff and slow the stricken foe,
As wounded wolves to covert go,
Drew backward to their ships.
And on that fleet, in vengeful ire,
The victors rushed with axe and fire.
But vain in air were torches flung;
In vain the rattling weapons rung
Round men with death at bay!



*"And on that fleet, in vengeful ire,
The victors rushed with axe and fire."*

Ye Gods ! How well Despair can fight,
When naught is left to win but flight !
How many gallant Greeks, ere night,
All stark and silent lay !

For madly, blindly, battling on,
Aglow with shame and pain,
All breathless, spent with strife and
toil,

At last they gained the main.
But, lo ! as lengthening shadows fell
'Neath Autumn's drooping sun,
Some guilty hand, on distant height,
For Persia waved a buckler bright,
That sparkled with a treacherous light,
But sank, like Treason's hope, in night :
The despot's course was run !

For spite of stress of battle o'er,
The weary victors homeward bore,
And scared the foe from Grecian shore,
And the great day was won !

And faint, and fainter, rose and fell
The troops' departing tread,
Till soon, in muffling distance lost,
It left us with the dead.

For solemn trust was ours to keep,
While shadows hid the plain,
In sleepless guard that night among
The stricken and the slain.

The golden moon, the silver stars,
In pity lent their light,
While pain-wrung moan, or shriek, or
prayer,
Rose fitful on the night.

And cold and white in marbled sleep,
Beside the watchfires, lay
The dead, whose dust yet hallows
The land they saved that day.

And while at Aristides' side
My vigil sad I kept,
The echo of a friend's sweet song
Most strangely o'er me swept.
His face, that gently smiled at Fate,
In vision beamed again.
Ah ! where was he who sang that morn ?
And woe for me in grief forlorn,
Upon that death-strewn plain !

But calm for aye their happy lot,
On fair Elysian strand,
Who lived to serve, and nobly died,
To save their native land.

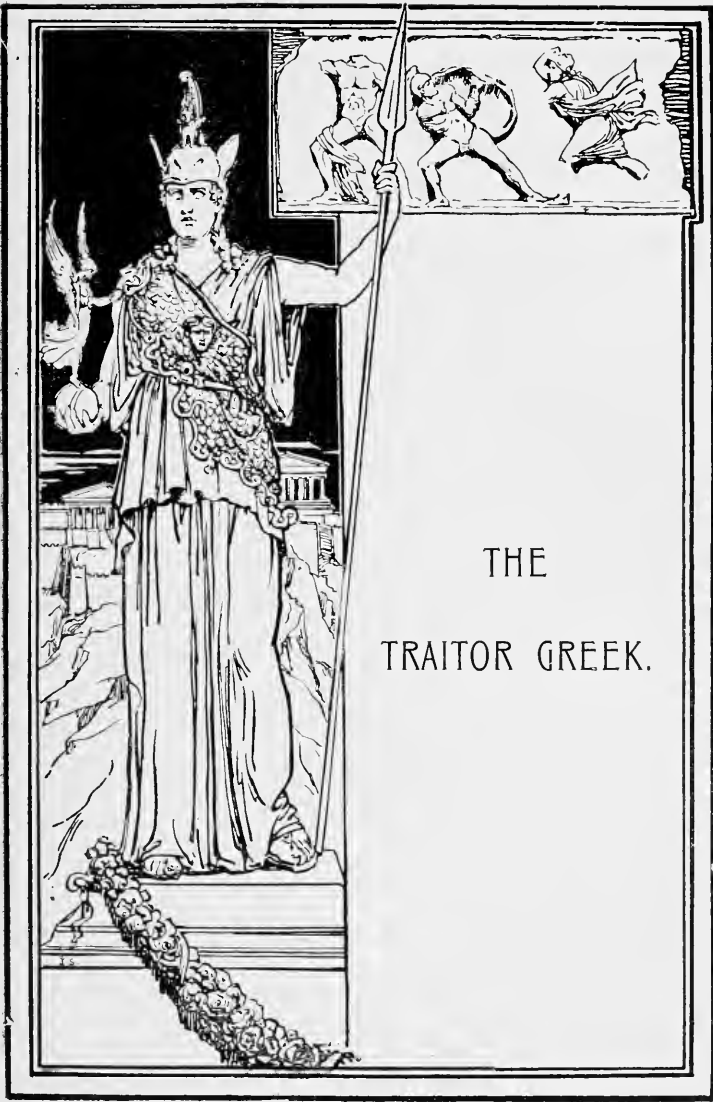
How great their deed, how deep their love
For homes where dear ones dwell !
And seven times sacred to our hearts
The cause for which they fell !

Majestic Athens ! Ruthless hands,
In Fate's resistless hour,
May tear from off thy peerless brow
The diadem of power !
The sons of sires thy valour made
The lords of land and sea,
May load with chains thy radiant form
That breathes of liberty !

But purer light than conquest's glare
Shall o'er thy name be cast ;
Nor crash of arms, nor bolt of doom
Can mar thy mighty past !

Though statue, fane, and column fall—
In desolation hurled,—
Their very fragments still shall set
A pattern to a world !

Immortal, 'mid the wrongs and tears
That cloud the tyrant's day,
Thy fire shall patriot hearts inspire
Where Freedom points the way !
And, gleaming through the mists of time,
For ever shall shine on
The story of thy dauntless fight
At glorious Marathon !



THE
TRAITOR GREEK.

ON THE MAKING OF TRAITORS.

THE history of ancient Greece shows clearly enough that the instances of treasonable thought and practice among the various communities of that land are traceable to causes that are to be found without, as well as within, the personality of the plotters themselves. In the perusal of a story bright with so many splendid episodes of valour and of self-devotion, it is with

a sense of disappointment and regret that the student of the annals of the various peoples gathered under the Grecian name discovers that every one of them is more or less chargeable with the same failing; Thebans, Locrians, Argives, Athenians, and Spartans furnishing us, unfortunately, with a crop of traitors, ready to hand.

Most convincingly and graphically, the late Emeritus-Professor F. W. Newman has set forth the struggles of Greece against unity, in contrast with the persistent efforts of ancient Italy to the attainment of that advantage; and when we seek to account for the unworthy and confusing part which

the traitor surely plays in old Greek history, there seems to be a predisposing cause for his appearance, which may reasonably be connected with that isolation, wherein, with the rarest exceptions, every city and territory stood, and that, too, willingly and with set determination.

The supreme object, which the Greek too frequently and disastrously proposed to himself, was only the advantage of his own particular township or state. To that end, and under a spirit that was in reality, but not confessedly, selfish, he was quite content to regard the common cause—the common weal of Greece as a whole

—as a matter of entirely secondary import ; and the result of such a feeling, most natural and understandable from certain points of view, is to be seen in the uprise of one supremacy after another,—Athenian, Spartan, or Theban, as the case may be.

Such a spirit, however, cannot but have involved the possibility of certain prominent and aspiring citizens, who loved their own state in their own selfish way, finding themselves lacking in whole-hearted devotion to the general good, when there was the most crying necessity for the display of a wider patriotism. And this is sadly shown to be the case at certain well-

known periods of supreme crisis in the fortunes of Ancient Greece.

In the case of the lesser Greek states, naturally dazzled as these were by the spectacle of the prestige, the sway, and the commanding influence of their more powerful neighbours, one can understand, and even make allowance for, this desire to improve their own position, and to change their "day of small things" into something better. But such a disposition of mind seems warranted only when we have regard to the rivalries of the Greek peoples among themselves; and up to that point there would appear a slighter reprobation to be dealt out;

the contingency of such things being linked indissolubly with human nature, as we know it.

But all such pleas in arrest of judgment fail at the very moment that we are confronted with the workings of this same spirit, engendered by these inter-communal jealousies, in regard to the attitude of Greeks towards Greece as a whole, in presence of a common external foe, such as Persia at one time, Macedon subsequently, or later still, Rome.

In this respect, alas ! the greater states and the smaller communities are alike guilty, and the proofs they furnish are as lamentable as they are

disgraceful. Between the Locrian Ephialtes, who revealed to Xerxes that secret path across Cithæron—and, by so doing, stabbed Greece in the back at Thermopylæ—and the Spartan, Pausanias, who sank low enough to traffic, for the selfish lordship of all Greece, with her arch-enemy, the Great King, detestation is about equally divided,—bearing in mind the fact that our judgment nevertheless cannot fail to be influenced in the one case by the reflection that the higher the position of the plotter the more called-for is our indignation at his moral turpitude, and the greater our sense

of satisfaction at his deserved retribution.

It is not too much to say that Sparta affords by far the worst and the most glaring instance of treason to Greece, and this not once or twice merely, but throughout her history. And the reason for such a charge is, that she had no excuse for bargaining with a foreigner. If she had an eye to her own paramount authority, not only in the Peloponnesus but through all Greece, that authority was really hers already. Among all the states it was the custom, however unwarranted that custom subsequently proved to be, to regard her soldiery as invincible,

and her predominance as a thing taken for granted, as well as deferred to, in the councils of Greece. This conventional position was tacitly accorded to her, notwithstanding the facts that she had come as a suppliant for Athenian succour in the grave straits to which the Messenian War had reduced her, that she had flinched from the picked troops of Mardonius at Plataea, that in the early days of the Peloponnesian struggle Athens had swept her triremes from the sea, and that in a subsequent contest with the dogged and thick-witted Bœotians her military prestige was irretrievably destroyed upon the field of Leuctra.

As a treason-factory Sparta, considered in the light of her own pre-eminence in Greece, stood egregiously without excuse. The readiest homage, the most openly accepted leadership over a group of communities that she might indeed be proud to lead, everything, in fact, to which the noblest and the most justifiable ambition of a true Greek might aspire, was hers. That was her proud position before the Persian came, and that position she continued to hold after the invader had been triumphantly driven back to Asia again; and she would have continued to maintain her place had it not been for the disgraceful treachery

of her own officer; because it was to that fact, as much as to anything else—transferring as it did the staff of office from the Spartan Pausanias to the Athenian Cimon—that was due the ripening of the Confederacy of Delos into the Athenian hegemony.

It is true that “black sheep dwell in every fold;” and of that, the very name of Themistocles is proof enough as far as Athens is chargeable with the production of traitors. But, as contrasted with Sparta, it may be safely alleged that the spirit of the Athenian people, the more generous principles of their government, and the comparative tolerance of their rule over

the states that came to be dependent on them, afforded a less congenial soil for the growth of that ill weed, treason, than did the rigidity and the essential selfishness that characterised the laws and the political institutions of the Spartans. It is infinitely easier to predicate treachery of a state, and of a people generally, in regard to Sparta, than to Athens. The individuality—the strictly personal character—of the treachery stands out far more clearly from the background of Athenian life and policy, than in the track of such regrettable episodes in the Spartan records.

One has to acknowledge that the

spirit of the two communities was totally different. The history of Athens may be vainly searched for the discovery of a just parallel to the calculating selfishness of Sparta, as one of the Greek states, in those crucial hours—precious as each hour, then, truly was—that immediately preceded that epoch-marking fight at Marathon. Where, too, it may be confidently asked, did Athens ever deal by an ally as the Spartans dealt by her, when, to divert the energies of the Athenians from the blockade of Thasos, they most dishonourably invaded the territory of the Athenians, with whom at that very time they were

in actual alliance? Athens, moreover, was never chargeable with harbouring such mistrust of a friend, as that which met and checked the chivalrous Cimon, when he led four thousand chosen troops to the aid of Sparta in the third Messenian war. In that instance the conduct of the Spartan authorities can only be accounted for by the vivid remembrance of their own treacheries, and by the fact that men are ever prone to attribute to others the same motives, and the same spirit by which they know themselves to be actuated. The peace of Antalcidas, again, which made it a comparatively easy thing for Persia to intermeddle in matters of Greek

policy, was due to the determining spirit of Sparta alone; and in the gallant stand which Thebes and Athens together made against the despotism of Philip of Macedon, Sparta held sullenly aloof, and not a single soldier of hers was found upon the fateful field of Chæronea; while, to crown the miserable tale of Sparta's delinquencies, it was her voice that called in the Roman, who speedily put a period to the independence of Greece.

If, then, in view of such instances as these, the treason of individual Spartans demands explanation, it can be said that in their case it certainly rested upon conditions more favourable to its

growth than could be found in the spirit and in the methods of Athenian government and social life.

Admitting freely all the records of individual Spartan courage and discipline, which have gone to make the name another word for valorous endurance, it nevertheless remains that the spirit of Lacedæmonian education and legislation (and, therefore, unavoidably the spirit of its general policy) was essentially narrow, selfish, and, in the end, shortsighted.

The very institutions of Lycurgus tended to defeat themselves, so far as the permanent expression of the spirit he sought to cultivate was concerned.

Granted the higher qualities with which the Lacedæmonians were credited, it is an incontestable fact that there were no people in all Greece more accessible to bribery. None were more coldly and remorselessly cruel, simply because the training provided for each Spartan was essentially selfish. The bow, so to speak, was strained to the breaking-point, and, as a natural consequence, it broke in one instance after another. The system that was sacredly, but most superstitiously, maintained by the banks of the Eurotas was like the couch of the fabled Procrustes,—the short were stretched out, and the men who were cursed with a superfluity of inches were

remorselessly abbreviated. Looking at the subject simply from the standpoint of human nature, how glad such folk would be to forget the lumps of iron that represented the coin current, and to betake themselves to the use of the glittering and far more convenient counters of silver and of gold! A gnawing hunger might deprive even the black broth of its bitterness; but the black broth was no bad preparation for the enjoyment of more toothsome food, and for the growing demand for a more accomplished cook. And thus the very rigidity of the long-vaunted Spartan simplicity of life resulted in a veritable craving for the luxuries of

self-indulgence, when these things were out of a Spartan's reach, whilst he recklessly snatched at them, as soon as he came within arm's length of the forbidden, and consequently more coveted, fruit. In brief, a much greater strain was laid on human nature than it could bear, and, therefore, unlike the freer and more natural life and institutions of Athens, the Spartan habits and spirit were thus better adapted for the making of traitors.

But, it may be urged, the Spartans punished their traitors, even as did the Athenians; and that is quite true, only in the case of Sparta the "awful

example" and the punishment do not seem to have had any lastingly salutary effect as far as the outcome of the spirit of Sparta, as a state, is observable.

It concerns the present subject, too, to note how those Spartans were ceaselessly on the watch against their enemies; and no greater or more besetting anxiety had they than that concerning the attitude of their own vast slave population — the Helots. That one fact furnished in itself an education in suspicion of others, and in ruthless self-regard. When it is bluntly stated, as it must be, that no single year presented an absolutely

“close season” for those poor Helots, at the hands of their brutal and calculating lords, it is easy to see how the spirit of their masters would be hardened into the most remorseless disdain for all the shame and the sorrow that go to make up the burden of slavery.

It is reasonable to assert that the treatment of the Helots in Lacedæmon was less endurable and more degrading than that of any other slave population throughout the Hellenic states.

To the Spartan, born to rule, and educated to despise the useful and honourable avocations of industrial

and of agricultural life, there would be little that savoured of surprise in the contemplation of Persian arrogance, or of Persian cruelty to the vanquished, to the captive, or to the slave.

Sparta deliberately burdened her citizens with all the drawbacks that unavoidably attend a small ruling class, which declares itself everywhere alike the uncompromising foe of even the mildest form of popular government. By strict enactment she even forbade a stranger to sojourn in her midst, lest her own children, perchance, should hear too much of the progress, the more elastic social conditions, and the larger

liberty that obtained in other cities or communities ! She encircled all the life of those sons of hers with conditions inflexible as iron, with the natural result that they overleaped the barrier as occasion served, and carried with them, into the less circumscribed life they entered, all a Spartan's disdain for the suffering or loss of any who might stand in his way, and all his wrongfully suppressed appetite for the enjoyment of the pleasant things of life, the abuse of which alone constitutes their agency for ill.

How was a fully-developed man possible under such a régime ? One cannot imagine such a possibility as a

Spartan Pericles. The knowledge of men and things, the ever-constant feeling of patriotism to his own land, blended with a perfect conversance with Greek institutions everywhere, the wide culture and the consuming love of knowledge and of art,—all these are things which only need to be named, to make us realise at once the strong dividing line that marks off the Athenian genius from the Spartan. Again, that gentle courtesy, that unselfish patience, that untainted service for the general good, combine to set the unswerving probity of Aristides in a light altogether different, and more attractive than that which falls on most of the recognised

embodiments of Spartan virtue. There was a freer and a more generous atmosphere in Athenian public life, wherein treason found it more difficult to draw its breath, but which certainly helped to develop every sure and noble result of freedom, as regards the intellect, the spirit, and the life of the citizens of such a city. That was the great end at which Athens aimed, and that entailed the assuring of content, and of opportunity, for the humblest as well as for the nobly born among her children. That such a lofty ideal still entailed difficulties, and drawbacks not a few, is a fact indelibly written down by history; but for all that, Liberty was then, as

she is still, and will enduringly prove to be, the mother of the truest and most unsullied patriotism, of the best and strongest home life, and of the most fruitful culture in art, in literature, and in thought.

In the making of traitors, Athens may be safely declared to have had comparatively little share. Where the man has leave to live and room to grow, treason finds a resting-place which can only be temporary and infrequent; whilst against the training that is selfish, and against the compression of the man into the system, no pride of valour, or of race, can prove a reliable panacea for the

evils of impatience, of deception, and of treachery, which are the sad but inevitable issue of such a code of regulations for private and for public life as that with which the name of Sparta stands identified.



THE TRAITOR GREEK.

Told at the time of the subjugation of Greece by the Romans, whose intervention, under METELLUS, Sparta had invited, B.C. 168.

The Spartan flute is silent, the Spartan
spirit dead,

And low beneath a stranger yoke the
Greek must bow his head.

From Macedon to Malea's Cape, from
Eastern shore to West,

There flashes in the sunlight the
Roman's conquering crest.

And Sparta's street re-echoed the iron-
girt legion's tread,

And fierce and high the war horns
blared as they would wake the
dead :

But curtained close, in chamber cool,
a wounded warrior slept,

And o'er a father's couch his child
unwearying vigil kept.

From dreamy rest the sleeper stirred,
but woke to sorrow's pain,—

“Alas ! poor Greece !” he murmured.

“Lost ! Vain every struggle ! vain !

For dead'ning sloth, no less than Rome,
has burdened her with doom,

And shrouds a race of nerveless slaves
in Fate's unending gloom.

And sternly true the dismal tale, how
 blood-stained civil strife,
In blinding greed for selfish sway,
 befouls a nation's life.
The Gods go forth from tottering walls;
 they spurn our cankered pow'rs ;
They lay the sceptre of the world in
 nobler hands than ours !

“ 'Twas when the beaten Persian fled
 across the watery plains,
The lust for Persian splendour coursed
 like venom through our veins.
Then fell that curse of Gods and men
 on Sparta's ancient fame,
That lies, and shall for ever lie, upon
 Pausanias' name !

O Fates ungenerous ! Would to heav'n
dull Thebes had served your turn,
Or wily Athens taught her crew such
treachery to learn !
What impious crime had Sparta wrought,
that Nemesis should claim
A dastard son of hers to light that torch
of blazing shame ?
Aye, boy, 'twas Treason's sick'ning
breath bedimmed our glorious
star,
And smothered in its fetid cloud the
glitt'ring spoils of war,
And shamed the deed of Sparta's King,
and his Three Hundred bright,
Who found their way to glory through
Thermopylæ's red fight !

And yet the gleam of ancient faith with
 radiance breaks anew
From names that tell of brave old days
 when man to man was true,—
When life was clean, and states were
 great, and chieftains of renown
Were fearless in the might of right, and
 trod the wicked down !

Men tell us how the cheers that hailed
 Plataea's famous day,
And urged the foe to faster flight, had
 scarcely died away,
When vaunts of all his sword had
 wrought, of life Greece owed to him,
With blunt contempt for others' toils,
 began his soul to dim.

The loud-lunged crowd with headlong
praise to greet the victor ran :
‘ Pausanias ! ’ where was name like his ?
the hour had brought the man !
And now let Athens prate no more of
deeds at Marathon ;
Pausanias’ name was Sparta’s fame ;
th’ Athenian boast was gone !
‘ That honest pride of his,’ they cried,—
‘ what was it but his right ?
And naught but mean and grudging
spleen such nobleness would slight ! ’
That flatterer’s cup, so deadly sweet, he
could not put aside ;
He thirsted for it, quaffed his fill,—and
of its poison died.

“Afar to distant fields of strife his bold
ambition flew,
And there, like Mede in arrogance, he
scorned his comrades true :—
Disdained to call himself a Greek,
despised the frugal fare,
And wallowed in voluptuousness 'mid
Eastern dainties rare.
With serfs and silver at his board, and
slave-girls at his call,
In all but name an Asian prince ! How
deep, how vile a fall !
No direr change might Circe work at
her bewitching feast,
Where pleasure's magic wand trans-
formed the hero to the beast !

Suspicion stirred, and soon was heard
a whisper strange and low,
That, 'mid the Greek confederate spears,
he trafficked with the foe !
And home to Sparta flew the word,
across th' Ægean main,
That Persian gold had reached his
heart where Persian steel was
vain.
But hard it is to mark at noon a spot
upon the sun,
'Tis sorry work to pluck a leaf from
wreath by valour won,—
And thankless showed the grim resolve
to scan Pausanias' shame,
And link with lie of deepest dye the
story of his fame.

To strike from loftiest seat the man
who wore a laurel crown ?

As soon might baying watch-dogs bring
a kingly lion down !

But blindfold though great Justice be,
the Goddess gropes her way,
Unerring, through unwonted paths, and
fastens on her prey.

“ Unlooked-for, at an Ephor’s feet, a
trembling helot fell,—

With visage scared, and faltering tongue,
beseeching leave to tell

Of danger to the Greek,—of plot,
which none might know but he,—

Whereto, by hap most strange, the
Fates had left with him the key !

The Ruler marked: 'Poor slave,' said
he, 'thy trouble I divine.

Plots? Dangers? Nay, 'tis madness
breeds such words, such looks as
thine!

Who owns thee? Say!—yet, sure thy
face I've known in days gone past!
'My lord!' he cried . . . 'Pausanias!'
. . . the Ruler's heart beat fast;

And straight in rising wrath he spake,—
'How dar'st thou join a name
I've trusted in, and loved of old, with
act or thought of shame?

Why, slave! Thy lies deserve the
whip, and thou shalt *feel*, at last,
How vain a wretched helot's word a
Spartan's faith to blast!

With heart of truth, and lip of fire, the
bondsman answered back,

‘’Twere lack of wit, my lord, to threat
with brutal lash or rack :

Let Greece be lost ! let Furies hurl their
horrors on her head !

What cares a slave, who knows no hope,
no rest, but with the dead ?

I tell thee, Ephor, man to man,
’twas kindness wrought through
thee

To me and mine, in evil time, that
brought me to thy knee :

Heav’n bless thy gracious lady’s care,
that fed a poor slave’s wife,

And famine-stricken little ones — the
lights of his dark life !

The curse, that smites a thank-
less knave, had been my rightful
fate,

If flinty heart of mine had hid this
peril to thy state !

How could I see thy noble house, and
all thou lov'st, struck down

Because a traitor Spartan plots to wear
a Persian crown ?

A word of mine thou may'st not take :
thy cruel law denies

That bondsmen's lips can utter truth,
or despots deal in lies !

But witness, here, my vow to make
Pausanias own his guilt,—

And Sparta through his heart shall
drive her weapon to the hilt !'

The slave kept tryst :—one starless eve,
to lonely temple came

The stealthy rulers, one by one, the
damning proof to claim :

And ripened plots, and falsehoods black,
were whispered and confessed

That nigh had forced their angered
speech from out each throbbing
breast.

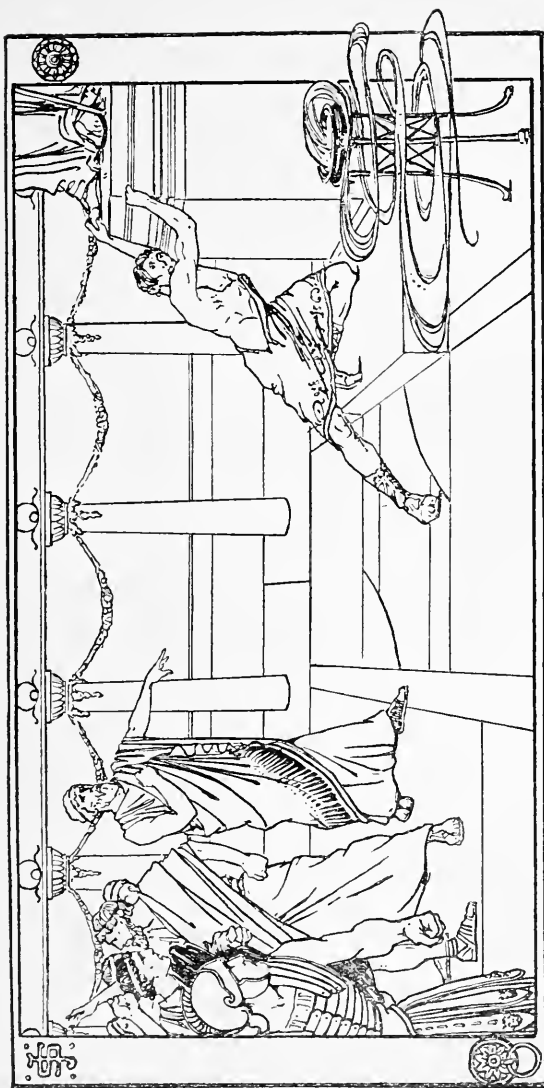
Then back they hied, with purpose dread
as clouds that o'er them hung :—

Amid the flashing tempest's roar was
loosed the silent tongue :

The word was 'Death,' without one
thought of pity !—and again

The answering lightning split the night,
the thunder crashed again !

Confronted unaware, hard by Athenè's
Brazen Fane,
The flurried coward told his crime, in
haggard glance of pain :
He fled like crafty fox unearthed, before
the raging crowd,
And Lacedæmon's very stones in judg-
ment cried aloud.
With frenzied rush he sprang within
the sanctuary door,
And clutched the altar, while he
prayed, as he'd ne'er prayed
before,—
With useless words, with impious cries
before the Pow'rs divine,
He dared their very ministers to drag
him from the shrine.



"He dared their very ministers to drag him from the shrine."

Page 98.



In justice stern, in vengeance calm, the
rulers of the state,

With mercy banished from their souls,
had gathered at the gate :

The rattling bolt was hoarsely shot to
bar the outmost gate,

And, with a shriek, the culprit caught
the fashion of his fate !

‘ Lie there, Pausanias ! and know thy
self-allotted doom !

This temple, where thou fled’st for life,
becomes thy living tomb !

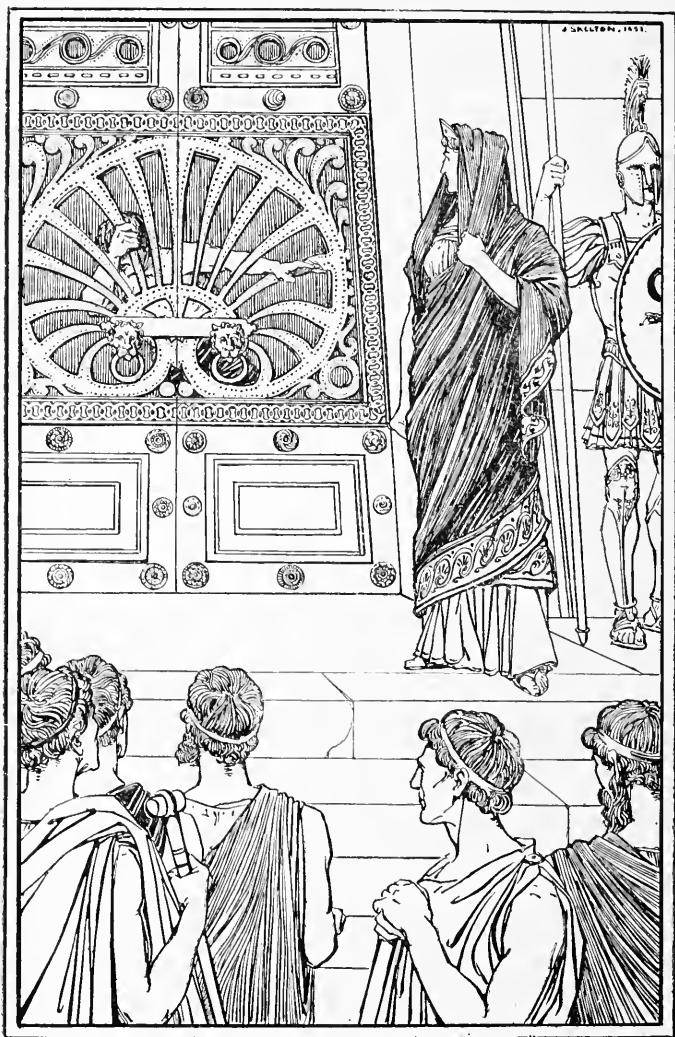
Lie there ! And know that food
nor drink thy lips shall enter
more !

And die accurst !’ So rang the voice
that awful threshold o’er.—

Upspringing from the altar's foot, in
fright and mad despair,
He shook with wild convulsive grip the
bars that caged him there :
He struck them, raved at Fate, then
gave the frantic struggle o'er,
And, spent with unavailing rage, fell
sobbing on the floor.

Again 'twas stillness, and anon the
crowd, with reverent mien,
Gave room, and through their midst made
way for Sparta's widowed Queen.
Once more the cowering victim raised
his hopeless, helpless gaze,
But, crimsoned with a darker shame,
crouched back in blank amaze.





"Sacred in her woe she stood."

And sacred in her woe she stood amid
the breathless throng,
While words of anger dire and deep
were trembling on her tongue.
No glimpse of yearning ruth, or
love, revived that shame-struck
one ;
The Spartan—not the woman, saw the
sinner—not the son !
‘ I recked not I should kneel,’ she said,
‘ to bless the lonesome day
That saw my kingly husband borne
along Death’s muffled way ;
But, witness Heav’n ! how from my
soul I hail the kind decree
That shielded him from all the grief
this miscreant wrings from me !

The Gods forefend that such as
thou should'st stain a Spartan
sire,

But hound thee forth—debased, dis-
owned, thou Persian-hearted liar!

The dead I summon back to earth, to
aid these lips of mine

To breathe a double curse on thee, thou
plague-spot on our line!

Would'st dare to live—to revel on, amid
thy country's wreck?

And help the tyrant Mede to plant his
foot upon her neck?

The rocks I'll tear to stones for walls to
hide thy fell disgrace,

Alone, without one friend, within thy
last dark dwelling-place.

Despair all hope ! And may the Fates
thy misery prolong !

And plunge thee down where traitors
howl beneath the Furies' thong !

Dishonoured be thy corse—cast forth
unburied ! and thy name

Held up for ever to the world a by-word
and a shame !'

She ceased. With quivering hand
she grasped a stone that near her
lay,

And thrust it 'gainst the temple-door,
and moaned,—and went her way.

The portal walled, from riven roof full
many a wrathful eye

Was bent in patience pitiless to watch
the traitor die.

With feet of lead the torturing hours
came trampling down his strength.
His piteous cries had sunk to sighs,—
the end was nigh at length :
The emptying glass of Time ran out,
and as the last grains hung,
Relentlessly from out the pile the
famished frame was flung.

“ Perchance, when Sparta’s glorious name
shall speak of ancient days,
When Rome’s resplendent sun has shed
its last red flickering rays,—
When, gathering on the Northern hills
from forest and from glen,
Some wild barbarians yet shall give the
world a race of men,—

When nobler heroes, strong of heart,
untainted, valiant, free,
And conquering, and to conquer still,
shall sweep o'er land and sea,—
When heav'n-born Freedom, at their
call, shall spread a tireless wing,
And every shore the ocean round with
songs of peace shall ring,—
When laws shall stand on truth and
right, and virtue mount the throne,
And love of country, not of gold, shall
call the world its own,—
Then in the ruler's stately court, and
in the peasant's cot,
At last,—in that fair, far-off time shall
traitors be forgot ! ”





THE
RESCUE-SHIP.



THE RESCINDING OF A POPULAR VOTE.

G E N U I N E admiration for the spirit, and for many of the characteristics of the Athenian people by no means implies an attempt to judge them by the standard of our own day.

Nevertheless, there are striking incidents in the annals of that most brilliant of all the communities of the ancient world, which remain unaffected

by the touch of time, and which reflect the varied play of that human nature, the identity of which everywhere tends to link the past and the present in one.

No more noteworthy instance of this can perhaps be produced than the spectacle afforded to us in the passionate wrath of Athens at the revolt of Mytilene,—the wild vengeance which, according to the custom and spirit of the times, she deemed herself perfectly right in exacting from the defeated rebels, and the sharp and almost instant recoil of the democracy from such sanguinary retribution, as soon as ever it realised the awful consequences of the sentence, for which

its indignant, and not wholly unjustifiable, anger was responsible.

For, it must be confessed that the case of Athens was a strong one.

Not only the assigned cause put forward by Mytilene for rebellion, but the particular juncture chosen for its initiation were such as might well have inspired the bitter no less than the reasonable resentment of the Athenian.

The condition of the city might then have been regarded as almost desperate.

Athens was literally faint from sickness. A terrible visitation of the plague had but recently been sweeping off her inhabitants like flies—no less

than twenty thousand victims attesting the severity of the blow which bade fair to paralyse her altogether,—and, when we make allowance for the lingering effects of the malady upon the individual survivors and upon the spirit of the people generally, the occasion must have seemed ill adapted for any aggressive efforts against her enemies, or for the successful defeat of any attack upon herself. Then, too, the adversaries leagued in opposition to her had been increasing both in numbers and in audacity. She was beset with difficulties from without, as well as within her own walls, and these latter her foes must have come

to regard as tottering already to their fall.

Such was the unfortunate and depressing condition of affairs when the State was struck with sudden and angry amazement at the unlooked-for and, it must be acknowledged, the unwarranted revolt of the people of Mytilene.

And the reason on which the rebels based their action only tended to intensify the exasperation naturally felt at Athens. It was such, in fact, as to provoke the astonishment even of Sparta and her confederates, who, of course, were none the less eager to admit the Mytilenæans to their alliance.

Their concern lay only with the accession of a new and possibly effective ally, and with the consequent delivery of an unexpected and probably fatal stroke, not only at the supremacy, but at the very independence of the Athenians. The justification of the rebellion in Lesbos was of small enough account with the antagonists of Athens; they availed themselves of it, as Athens would promptly have done had she been in their position, and that they proceeded to do, leaving the revolutionaries to find their own reasons for their conduct.

Very lame, at the best, was the excuse which the leaders of that futile rebellion were able to urge. They do

not appear to have had a single grievance of which to complain. They could not charge Athens, as far as they themselves were concerned, with any act of tyranny ; for, upon them at any rate, the Athenian headship had rested lightly. For, when they appealed for succour before the representatives of Sparta and her Peloponnesian allies, they could plead in justification of their act nothing whatever that Athens had done in opposition to their particular interests ; they produced nothing, in fact, but indirect complaints as to her method of dealing with other dependencies, and fears, or fancies rather, on their own part as to her proble-

matical dealings with themselves at some future time. Never, in fact, were flimsier excuses for a wanton rebellion ever alleged against a paramount state by people within its accepted influence.

This very fact should temper our judgment on the remorseless reprisal determined upon by the Athenians in the hour of their triumph. And, moreover, when such action is calmly reviewed under the light afforded by the practices and by the feelings of that day, it is not possible to withhold our ready admiration for a people humane enough to regret, and morally brave enough to reverse, a decision the results of which

they realised almost as soon as ever the members of the Assembly that decreed it had dispersed, and begun to contemplate at their own hearthstones, and in the presence of those near and dear to them, the inevitable misery they had invoked.

In a word they dared not, as husbands, fathers, or sons, contemplate the indiscriminate cruelty and the disruption and desecration of family life, which would ensue at Mytilene, on the arrival there of the State-Trireme bearing the decree ; for, further, it is to be observed that the vessel had been despatched that very day, with a rapidity purposely designed to check

any interference with the prompt execution of so terrible a sentence as that of death to every man, and slavery for every woman and child. No after-thought of mercy was to be allowed to stand between such a fearful doom and its ruthless accomplishment.

To such a pitch of anger had the state been wrought ! And in the contemplation of such an act, it may not be without interest to observe that there was no deliberative council—no “second chamber”—to which such a decree might be submitted for rejection, or even for emendation. Here would surely have been an instance in which the essential and most desirable

function of another, and a consultative, assembly might have been most wisely and beneficially discharged. To any who are inclined to "ask now of the days that are past," such a reminiscence is eloquent indeed. Had such a body of statesmen or councillors existed, that passionate vote of the popular assembly would, in all probability, have either been thrown out altogether, or else discriminately amended; and demagogues who played to the gallery, and with whom self-advertisement as much as statesmanship was an attraction, would have been relegated to their merited level.

And yet, on other grounds, one cannot

regret the absence of any such merely legislative check. Never did the character of the Athenian people show to greater advantage than in their quick self-reproach and sorrow for a cruel resolve, and in their frantic effort to make manifest their instant repentance.

Such conduct revealed the triumph of the people over themselves. It was a tribute to the humanity of a democracy; it was the act of the citizens themselves,—their own substitution of mercy for a blind revenge that saw no difference between guilt and innocence. And here, once again, as in many another regard, the genius of Athens, judged simply by the stand-

ard of life and conduct accepted throughout Greece in those days, stands out in bright and in astounding contrast with that of Sparta.

How cold-blooded, pitiless, and regardless of devoted service rendered ungrudgingly to the cause of Greek freedom, was the ruthless butchery of the Plataeans by the Spartan soldiery! How remorseless the blotting out of that heroic little city from the map of Greece! The state that could not only decree that, but actually perpetrate it, deserves almost any fate; and dark is the lot of Sparta in our eyes to-day, when we remember that the name of no illustrious Spartan helps to add to the

glory of Greece upon the fields of thought, of literature, and of art. Such immortality is the gift of liberty alone ; and to the spirit of popular freedom Sparta, to her own loss, was the sworn and the constant foe.

It becomes the student not to forget, in this connection, the attitude of Eurymedon, who, with his Athenian troops and sailors, coldly looked on at the dreadful massacre in Corcyra, where one political faction—in that savagery born of party rancour—slaughtered every member of the opposing faction within reach. All this is terribly and shamefully true ; but according to the moral code of

that age, mere spectators of that sanguinary incident would be held as occupying a different position to the actual perpetrators of the deed, and it would be consequently reasonable to draw a distinction between the abstention of Eurymedon at Corcyra and the execution of the starving garrison by Archidamus and his Spartans at Plataea.

Nor is it pretended that Athens exacted no punishment for the treachery of Mytilene; but what we do know is, that to the credit of her citizens they did shrink from sweeping all alike, without discrimination as to their crime, within one wild and passionately uttered

condemnation. A thousand hostages, comprising doubtless a number of the actual ringleaders, together with their Spartan abettor, Salaethus, paid with their lives the penalty of their unsuccessful revolt; but in that day, and in the judgment of the most enlightened and humane amongst the Greeks, such would have seemed by no means an excessive requital for an insurrection so completely without justification.

The whole story presents us, in fact, with one of the most noteworthy episodes in old Greek history. We see a city shaking itself from its terrible sickness, facing a combination

of hostile powers, the fatal tightening of whose grip seems imminent, and confronting the added terror suddenly sprung upon it by the treason of one of its trusted dependencies, while its insatiable Peloponnesian foes close round it, quietly and grimly expecting nothing less than the speedy and irretrievable collapse of the Athenian power. And then, to the surprise of friends and enemies alike, when all things seem hopelessly adverse, we are confronted with the stirring spectacle of Athens rising to supremest effort, fitting out a fresh fleet of one hundred new battle-ships, crushing the rebellion in Mytilene that at one time seemed to portend

the doom of her empire, actually sealing up the enemies' vessels in their own ports, and defiantly harrying the whole of the Peloponnesian coasts with fire and sword. Such is the picture with which history brings us face to face, while our wonder is deepened as we find that state, in the very hour of her victory, exercising a self-discipline in her chastisement of the treachery of Lesbos which was as exceptional, at the time, as it was creditable.

It is refreshing to contemplate the free and varied expression of national feeling thus revealed by Athenian public and private life ; whilst, in view

of the circumstances that led up to the exciting despatch of a second ship, the very next day, with an express command reversing the terrible decision promulgated only the day before, there is a certain amount of satisfaction at knowing that that first vote was stopped by no administrative check or contrivance, but by the spontaneous and generous impulse of the Athenian democracy itself. Had such action proved futile, either to rescind the decree, or to hinder the execution of it, a dark stain would have forever and indelibly rested upon the traditions of Athens.

But when the courage of the Ten Generals had overridden the fear of

the penalties, clearly enough indicated by Thucydides as attaching to any who might fail in the attempt to reverse a popular decree, and when the Assembly had purged itself of an act, which even in those less humane times, incurred the charge of blood-guiltiness, as well as bad policy, the interest shifts to the stirring scene of the instant despatch to Lesbos of that Rescue-ship, with orders to the Athenian commander at Mytilene to stay his hand.

Probably such a vessel might be found, not in the Piræus, but rather in the harbour of Munychia, which was slightly nearer to the city, and was devoted to the service of the

Athenian Admiralty; and heavy was the task that lay before her. The first vessel, despatched the day before, would have the start of her by some twenty-four hours, or possibly a little less. But if the sailors of that period were of the same hearty and generous spirit which we know to characterise the sailors of to-day, they would have relished little enough the wretched business on which they were despatched. The fastest vessel in all the Athenian fleet might well have proved a laggard on such a thankless errand. Anything like a breeze, or even an air, from the eastward would have materially tended to retard her

passage across the Ægean, whilst, on the other hand, a crew picked, every man of them, for their muscle and their known powers of endurance, and enthusiastically eager for the race, would settle themselves to their work with a wild and joyous alacrity—increased by promises of rich reward—that would be of happiest augury for the speed of the ship entrusted with the word of mercy for the condemned men, and for the wretched women and children at Mytilene. To such conditions besetting the departure of the second vessel may, without much tax on the imagination, be added the possible dropping of the easterly

breeze; and if we suppose to ourselves a ship stripped of every possible encumbrance in the shape of masts, spars, and sails,—as was the custom of the Athenian navy, which in entering on a sea fight usually relied upon oars alone,—and cleared for a long and desperate stern chase over a smooth sea, there would appear chance sufficient of an arrival at Mytilene in time for the reprieve to be delivered.

And such was happily the fact. If it be surmised, for instance, that the craft conveying the sentence loosed from port on a Monday afternoon about six o'clock, and that she be allowed a speed of say five miles an

hour on her miserable mission, she might drop anchor off Mytilene about two o'clock on the Wednesday afternoon. Again, if it be imagined that the second ship was lightened of every unnecessary burden, that she carried none other than the requisite officers and crew, with some relief-men to take a spell at an oar where they might be wanted, that she rode the calm sea very lightly and under more favourable atmospheric conditions than the first ship, we can think of her arrival at her destination in ample time to prevent the butchery decreed. Moreover the execution of some seven thousand victims must have

necessarily entailed time for preparation, and the authorities to whom the fearful order had been delivered may well have found that not until the dawn of the next day could the dispositions for their dreadful work be matured.

Meanwhile, remembering the eagerness with which men set about the undoing of their previous resolve, the second vessel, bearing the reprieve, would, it may be thought, be sent off somewhere, possibly, about three o'clock on the Tuesday afternoon, and, under the supposedly opportune conditions, she may have maintained on her happier voyage an average speed throughout the passage of about seven

and a half miles an hour, and such a course would bring her into harbour at Mytilene just as night was falling on the Wednesday evening, some six hours or so after the arrival of the order that had plunged the wretched inhabitants of the place into the agony of despair.

And here, as a matter of interest to all concerned with naval affairs, it may not be out of place to allude to the names borne by some of those old Athenian battleships in times so far distant from our own.

With the names of the two State triremes, viz., the "Paralus" and the "Salaminia," every reader of Greek history must be more or less familiar ;

but it is more than ordinarily interesting to note that among the vessels of that Greek state, so long recognised as the Mistress of the Sea, we light upon such names as “*Νίκη*,” “*Ηγεμόνη*,” “*Εὐπλοία*,” “*Θεραπεία*,” and “*Ἐλευθερία*,” which have figured upon our British Navy list with no less honour, as respectively the “*Victory*,” the “*Queen*,” the “*Bonaventure*,” the “*Assistance*,” and the “*Liberty* ;” while under the titles of “*Σώζουσα*” and “*Πρόνοια*” one traces such designations as the “*Aid*” and the “*Foresight*,” which figure in the records of that old Armada fight, which will ever be known as “*England’s Salamis*.”

THE RESCUE-SHIP.

*An episode of the Revolt of Mytilene against
Athens, B.C. 427.*

The dying daylight softly played
On pile and pillar fair ;
But strange discordant sounds were
borne
On evening's peaceful air.
For fearful was the deed whereon
The sun that day looked down,
When Athens, reckless in her wrath,
Had soiled her Violet Crown.

It chanced the citizens had quelled
A fierce rebellious fray,
And bound, and humbled at their
feet

Proud Mytilene lay.
Indignant anger fired their hearts
To spare not, but to smite :
And outraged Athens nigh forgot
Her mercy in her might.
In vain the broken rebels prayed
Their conqueror to stay
The fatal sword of punishment
Uplifted but to slay.
Their destiny was "slavery
For woman and for child,
And death to every man," so ran
The judgment dread and wild !

No time for stir of gentler thought
Was giv'n by soft delay :
But, on the hour, to Lesbos straight
The doom was borne away.
And ready in Piræus Bay,
All trim, and stored, and manned,
The *Salaminia* trireme rode,
A rope's length from the strand.
With dismal tardiness her crew
Unmoored the well-known barque,
That like a vulture toward his prey
Slow swooped on pinion dark.
The muttering multitude ashore
Had watched her out of sight,
Then homeward hied, while on their
wrath
Came down the quiet night.

With eager steps and clamouring
tongues,

Returning crowds streamed in
Beneath the white Piræan gate
That echoed back their din.

And stirred with like indignant ire,—
Regretting, doubting naught,—
Isagoras, the general,

His stately dwelling sought.
With haughty mien that brooked no
word

Of welcome from his slave,—
Forgetting, too, the kind caress
His faithful hound would crave,—
He passed along the corridor,
And where a fountain played,
He sauntered restlessly awhile
Beneath the dusky shade.

In satisfaction grim he mused
On vengeance rightly wrought,
And how on graceless rebels' heads
Meet chastisement was brought :
When, wondrously from chamber near
A lyre's sweet music stole,
And poured its all-subduing strain
Upon his angered soul.
He hearkened, while with mystic
charm
The notes around him rang ;
Divine that touch upon the strings,
Belov'd the voice that sang !
“ Irenè ! Daughter mine ! ” How soft
That dear one's name was breathed !
Her heart made answer, while her
arms
Around his neck were wreathed.

“Ah! welcome, father!” Tremblingly

She cried. “For thou can’st say
How false the tale, so dread and
sad,

That rent my heart this day!
Old Lydon, at the porch, declared
The Assembly, with one breath,
Had giv’n all Mytilene o’er
To bondage and to death.

It is not—sure, it cannot be

The truth! Say ’tis not so!
Athenians could not wreak revenge
So savage on a foe!

To cast the mother, wife, and maid
To tyrant’s chain and thong,—
The husband, sire, and son despatched
In one red murdered throng?”

With tearful earnestness she scanned
Her father's steadfast face :
Caressed the while, and folded close
In strong and dear embrace.
"Nay, child," he firmly said; "mourn not
Rebellion's rightful fate !
Remember, Athens bares her sword
In justice, not in hate.
Be silent, dear one, as thou must,
At Mytilene's crime,
That struck against our state, and
struck
In most distressful time.
When round us closed a myriad foes
In threatening, tight'ning ring,—
'Twas then that rebel city chose
To wound with treason's sting !

Nay, more ! Bethink thee, how the
plague

Had walked its death-strewn
way !

How warriors' arms and women's
hearts

Alike grew weak that day !

Accurst the guile that planned the
hour

And fashion of the blow !

And well may retribution speed

To lay such traitors low ! ”

As rushing winds in stillness die,

When dark clouds break in rain,—

As sinks in calm, when storms are
sped,

The loud resounding main,—

Her sorrow, mute, compassionate,
Her tears that softly fell,
Surprised and swayed her father's
mood
With all-subduing spell.

“My father!”—with a gentle plea
Kind heav'n might urge—she
said,
“What thoughts, but thoughts of pity,
wait
On memories of the dead?
Oh, think once more of that dread
plague
That shadows yet our life,—
That left me lone and sisterless,
And thee bereft of wife!”

Our Medon, too, who rode with
thee

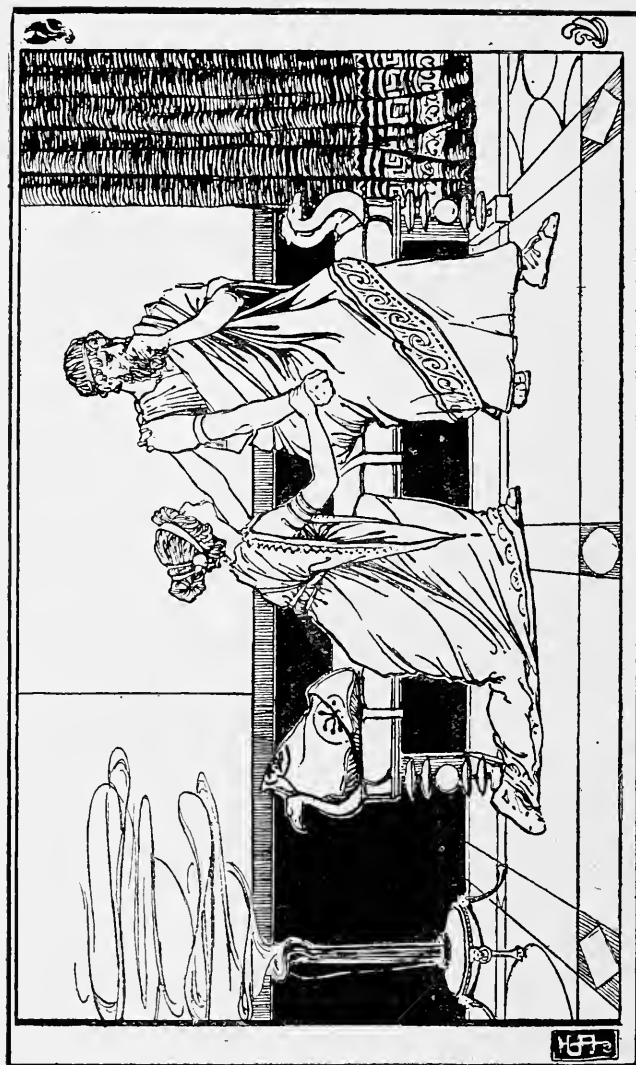
To foray, scorning fear,
And sighed away his bright young
life

Beneath a Spartan spear !
'Twas hard to bear ! yet Fate might
hold

A direr harm in store ;
Thou know'st how living troubles
pain,

When dead ones are no more !
For death has saved them from the
chain

The captive slave must wear :
The exile's lot, the victim's pain,
Can never touch them there !



“What woes were mine, should Athens fall?”

Yet, think on me—the only one

Now left to thee in life !

What woes were mine should Athens
fall

O'erwhelmed in fatal strife ?

The lot thou'dst dread for me, thy
child,

When thou wert in thy tomb,
Athenians, mad with ire, decree
For Mytilenè's doom !”

The maiden ceased : such moving
prayer

Her lips ne'er breathed before.

He trembled at her tone, her
touch,

With sense unfelt of yore.

For furious shouts of angry crowds
Had swept his soul along,
And passion's glare had dazzled him,
And blinded him to wrong !
But face to face with her he held
More dear than all beside,
The veil was torn away : revenge
In her mild presence died !
To desecrate such life as hers ?
To break her heart with woe ?
That flash of love revealed the ill
That smites a conquered foe !
Each moment clearer showed the deed
In all its horror bare !
For who that treasured hearth and
home
Dared realise it there ?

'T was done ! aye, done beyond
recall !

The ship, with that decree
Of death and grief, was speeding
on

Across the star-lit sea !
O'erborne with agony of soul,
That seemed as vain as deep,
The humbled chief made vow to
heav'n,

That neither rest nor sleep
Should e'er be his, till Athens,
roused

And smarting with her shame,
From that day's frenzied act of
blood

Had purged her ancient fame !

With troubled spirit, straight from
home

He passed, with purpose strong,
Where murmurs floated strangely
by,

The wayfarers among :
And wondrously by whisper grave,
By gesture marked, 'twas shown
The selfsame pitying pow'r, that
changed

His heart, had touched their
own.

For, conscience-smitten citizens,
Abroad in moonlight bright,
Condemned that day's revengeful
deed,
Appealed for ruth and right,

And prayed him, leader as he was,
To voice the commons' thought
That morning's sun again should
see

The State to council brought.
They recked not of the danger
sure

That hung o'er one and all,
When Fate might wait on men who
dared

The Assembly to recall !
Why fear the hemlock's dead'ning
draught ?

Why falter in such cause ?
'T'were nobler far to die, than
live

Defiled by bloodstained laws ?

Scared sleep, that night, from gloomy
homes

On ruffled wing had fled :

Remorse came hand in hand with
grief,

That wailed as for the dead.

And many a heart lay stunned and
faint,

For spent was anger's flame—

As sick men lie in helplessness

When fever quits the frame.

In Mytilenè's desperate need,

'Twas well the Generals Ten

Could cast aside the toils of fear,

And show themselves true men,—

Men, strong, and wise enough to
rein

The demagogue's rash pow'r,
While precious lives by thousands
hung

On ev'ry flying hour !
They flung away the timid plea,
For form and custom due,—
The cry of multitudes o'erbore
The scruples of the few ;
And naught compassion's path might
bar,

The while those leaders all
In hurried, anxious conclave,
vowed

The sentence to recall !

'Twas dawn : uprolled the flashing sun
O'er ocean's purple rim,
And shot o'er earth the glittering shafts
That make the day-star dim.
And cheerily, at early morn,
From wakened mart and street,
Out rang the lusty heralds' cry,
That bade the Assembly meet.
Not all, alas ! with willing hearts
Pressed up that oft-trod hill :
Full many a soul on vengeance fell
Morosely brooded still.
And gen'rous hearts with courage high
Might well for pity plead,
When Gods in vain may strive with
men
Of base and brutal breed !

That sea of faces—silent all,
And earnest as in pray'r—
Befitted well the cause that found
The citizens drawn there.
Before them, void of gentler thought
That o'er so many swept,
At once the commons' boast and
bane,
Rude Cleon boldly stept.
That deed of yesterday was his!
or, fired by vulgar hate,
'Twas he who bade the city hurl
Its victims to their fate.
Regret for that, his selfish thought
Interpreted full well,
And told him that same deed and he
Together stood or fell.

With front of brass he faced the
throng,

And poured, in accents coarse,
The torrent of his ire and scorn

With all the wilder force,—
O'erwhelmed with sneers, weak fitful
fears

That now for respite cried,
And bade the State stand firm on
law,

Or quit her seat of pride.
With deft maliciousness of heart,
He dealt with practised hand
Such blows as demagogues can
deal,

And statesmen scarce withstand!

For, right confounded seemed with
wrong

On Cleon's wordy tongue,
And Mytilenè's friends grew pale,
While loud the plaudits rung.

But stillness reigned, as rose in
air

Compassion's holy plea,—
Entreating Athens to reverse
That act of infamy—
Refuse, at once, to sacrifice
Such hecatomb of blood,
And stain with red revenge her
name
That yet had spotless stood.

For all the craft of wolfish rage,

'Twas matched by nobler skill :

For Gods decree that good shall be

The conqueror of ill.

By hostile shout, by rapturous cheer,

That listening crowd was riven,—

But words that scorch, and tones
that melt,

Their message home had driven.

Then fell a mighty calm : a voice

'Mid beating hearts was heard,

Invoking from the Fates one last

Irrevocable word !

“For Mercy?” Like some silvery beam

A myriad hands upflashed !

“For Vengeance?” Darkly, dreadfully,

Revenge with pity clashed !



*"To speed the blessèd Rescue-Ship
Across the Ægean Main."*

A moment's doubt,—and then a shout

Of triumph mounted high !

For Athens saved her peerless fame,

And laid her fury by.

In loud delight the multitude

Rushed forth, and broke away :

And word, in headlong haste, went out

The bloody deed to stay !

'Twas outward through the harbour

gate,

And onward to the sea,

The herald horsemen galloped fast

To bear the glad decree.

And eager citizens in crowds

Came thronging road and plain,

To speed the blessèd Rescue-ship

Across the Ægean main.

They sought a vessel fleet and staunch,
They called a stalwart crew,
To cleave the surge, and toss the spray,
Whate'er the wind that blew.
And 'mid the war-worn shipping
moored
At anchor in the Bay,
New-built, like greyhound clean and
trim,
The cruiser "*Victory*" lay.

The heralds hailed, — they leapt
aboard,—
They showed the State's decree,—
And straight her captain, Thoron,
made
Reply right cheerily,—

“ ’Twas well for Mytilenè’s sake

We had not put to sea !

And well that never mast, nor spar,

Nor sailing gear have we !

The Gods themselves are with us—

The Brethren Twain behind,

And Æolus before our prow

Hath laid the Eastern wind !

And feather-light the buoyant craft

Shall skim the glassy seas,

And oarsmen strong shall lift her
on

Like wild-bird on the breeze !

Then call my trusty rowers all,

Pick’d men, all trained and true,—

And ne’er a man shall ship beside

The herald and the crew.

Away, aboard ! and drop the coast,
Before the sun be set !
For all the “ *Salaminia's* ” start,
We ’ll overhaul her yet ! ”

Then pressing round that brawny
band
Of oarsmen on the quay,
Came they, whose hearts were with
their friends
In Lesbos far away.
They vowed reward of gold un-
told,
With gifts of wine and food,
If heart and strength availed to
save
That dreaded deed of blood.

Then fast aboard the man-o'-war
That lightly pressed the sea,
The rowers at the master's call
Came tumbling joyfully.
And as they shipped their oars, the craft
Seemed quivering for the course,
As trembles 'neath a rider free
Some fleet and fiery horse.
And then, in awesome stillness
Was hush'd that mighty throng,
The while from Thoron 'mid the men
The word was passed along—
The flow'rs to wreathe, the pray'rs
to breathe,
The votive cup to pour,—
And swift the splashing stern-rope
loosed
The good ship from the shore.

“Give way, ahead!” Like clarion’s note
The wished-for mandate rung,
And cheer on cheer, from myriad
throats,
An answer wildly flung :
O’er wharf and vessel, rock and tower,
It swelled with billowy thrill,
And echoed far and high along
Munychia’s lofty hill.
Then flashed like silver in the sun
Full fifty oars a-side,
The while the noble craft began
To cleave the golden tide :
And through the roadstead, past the
mole,
With gathering way she bore,
As fainter through the distance fell
The clamour by the shore.

Then down the blue Saronic Bay,
As 'mid the soil the plough,
She drove, and struck the lifting wave
In furrows from her prow :
And past Hymettus' spur, where
smoked
The Sacred Altars Four,
She sped on maiden voyage that day,
As ship ne'er sailed before !
And Thoron watched his landmarks
far
In sunny haze grow dim,
Till dropping one by one they sank
Beneath the sea-line's rim,
And gloried in his chieftainship
Of such a barque and crew,
As from the swinging oars, astern
The glacing ripples flew.

He little recked he bore that day
No warriors armed for fight,
While but a band of rowers manned
His cruiser for her flight !
He lightly laughed, for Athens held
The lordship of the main,
And tethered foes like kennelled
hounds
Lay fretting at their chain.
What call for fear, though far or near
Some battleship might hail ?
'Twere but a jest, if ne'er a breeze
Might fill a stranger sail !
What hope for lumb'ring Spartan hulk,
Or bragging Corinth's pride,
To grapple with a chase that slipped
Like dolphin through the tide ?

The rippling rush of parted seas,
That dashed the bows around,
The measured beat of pinewood
oars

Had music in their sound ;
He scanned the rowers, pulling
all

With iron grip and swing,
As the throbbing vessel sprang with
leaps

That made the rowlocks ring !

So, Southward, like majestic bird
That wings a tireless flight,
With feathering blades the good ship
flew

Before the westering light ;

And Eastward by the solemn steep
Of Sunium grim and high,
That showed like lonely watch-tower
black

Against the crimson sky.
Then wondrously rock, mountain,
shore

In peace were folded all,
With naught astir,—save from the
cliff

The weary sea-fowl's call—
Or where the murm'ring waters
lapped

The Naiads' haunts among—
Or where from Temple on the
hill

Arose the evening song.

Then mystic shadows silent came
Like vanguards of the night,
When Macris robed in sombre
grey

Rose full upon their sight.
They caught the timid bleat of
flocks

From grassy knoll and dell,
With lowings of the sleepy kine
That floated from the fell.

Yet onward ever toiled that
crew

At speed they dared not slack,
And stripped like wrestler to the
waist,

Each oarsman bent his back,

And thought on that Strength-giver
great

Amid the reeking hold,
Where panting breath and straining
limb

Sore tale of labour told.

But still no wearying hand gave way,
And each pulled staunchly on,
While willing mates with morsels
plied

Those rowers one by one.

Without a pause, with hungry
mouths

They snatched the oilèd meal,
And fed their fill, and quaffed the
wine

That turned their nerves to steel.

Then heart-of-grace they took, and
praised

The Goddess all divine
Who gave the corn ; and while they
blessed

The God who loved the vine,
The piper of the ship flung
out

A lightsome, lilting tune,
And joyously they shot away
To meet the rising moon.

Through airless night the pilot
steered

By that still orb that tells
Of icy blast, and snowy realm
Where stormy Boreas dwells.

Aloft, and mirrored in the deep,
The heav'nly watch-fires burn,
The while the notes of pipe and song
Fall faint and far astern.

And shimmering o'er the sky-line far
A beamy lustre lies,

And soon with lamp of ruddy gold

The moon lights up the skies—
As 'twere in pity, beckoning on

Where weeping Lesbos lay,
And smiling o'er the mariners

Along their weary way.

With softened ray the glory bathed

Geræstus' lonely hill,

Where gleamed Poseidon's temple
old

In radiance white and still.

They might not stay, they could but
pray

The God who filled the fane
To bind the treacherous sea, and
lay

His trident on the main.

And now, full flight, they course the
deep,

Like sea-gull on the wing,
And spurting sprays from bows and
blades

The lusty oarsmen fling.
Before the stem and far astern,
Like gems of liquid pearl,
Amid the moonbeams' mellow light
The dancing wavelets curl.

Yet vain the night's reviving
breath

To cheer that flagging band,
For loos'ning grip on labouring
oar

Was laid by failing hand.

"Row on, brave hearts!" cried
Thoron,

"'Tis life or death, men! Row!"

And flashing through the sea's wide
waste

With gallant stroke they go.

Unceasing ever! Not for them

The sleep the weary slept!

For 'neath the setting moon, their
oars

A clanking rhythm kept,

Till broke the dawn in silver
light,
And showed where far away,
Like fleecy cloud 'twixt sea and
sky
Ionian Chios lay.

Then golden o'er the starboard
bow
Melæna's headland towered,—
And oh ! to rest in citron grove,
By vine and palm-tree bowered !—
To bask awhile in beauty's smile,
As Chian maidens sang,
And through the glade, 'mid scent of
flow'rs
The merry music rang !

With all the fiercer glare the sun
O'erpowered that choking throng,
And heavier grew the fearful task
To drive that ship along !
In palsied pow'r, from nerveless hands,
Men dropped the wavering oar,
And lay as helpless as the dead
Who never might toil more !
Once more the master's cheery call
Aroused the fainting crew,
And quick from stifling bench to bench
The ready helpers flew.
With frantic effort, once again,—
Teeth clenched, and quivering lip,—
They gave, like men, their sagging
strength
To speed that Rescue-ship.

The Gods be praised ! At last they
made

The Lesbian mountain high !
At last they rounded Malea's
cape

All white against the sky !
At last, like wounded bird that
flags

On worn and quivering wing,
In Mytilenè's Bay they dropped
With one last fluttering spring.

'Longside the "*Salaminia*" there,
They let the anchor fall ;
While rapturous shouts of joy
arose
From shipping, shore, and wall.

For ne'er on land or ocean wide
A mightier race was run !
And ne'er on great Olympia's course
A nobler prize was won !
'Twas life to men fast pent within
Death's shadow till the morn !
'Twas glad relief to woman's grief
In agony forlorn !
And Athens saved her name from
shame,
And laid her fury down ;
And undefiled by vengeance wild
She wore her Violet Crown !

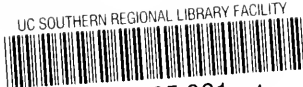


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